

CITY OF DERBY
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
February 9 2010 6:30 P.M.
DERBY CITY HALL – ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS
MINUTES

Call to order:

Chairman Joseph Bomba called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

All rose and pledged allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Glenn Stevens, Greg Russo, Ken Hughes, Michael Kelleher and Chairman Joseph Bomba.

Also present: Mayor Anthony Staffieri, Director of Economic Development Sheila O'Malley, and Corporation Counsel Joseph Coppola.

Additions, Deletions, Corrections and Adoption of Agenda:

Mr. Bomba would like to delete "if necessary" for the Executive Session and add in discussion and negotiations regarding a proposal made by a developer to the City of Derby. Motion to approve the agenda as amended by Mr. Hughes, second by Mr. Stevens, all in favor, motion passes.

Approval of Minutes - January 12, 2010

Motion to approve by Mr. Russo, second by Mr. Stevens, all in favor, Mr. Stevens and Mr. Kelleher abstained, motion passes.

Public Portion:

The public portion began with three letters being read into the record:

Markanthony Izzo
328 Olivia Street
Derby, CT 06418

I thank you for the opportunity to express my opinions about the downtown redevelopment. It is important enough for me to be here today that I left work early to do so. It appears there is a concept already in place but I would like to offer a couple of additional thoughts. First, I believe the current RT 34 that runs parallel to the Derby City Hall has no benefit to Derby other than helping motorists "pass through" our city. At times during the day it is dangerous to cross and I still don't understand why the Elizabeth and Main Street light goes into a "flashing" mode after 10pm especially with the blind curve coming from the west. Having said that and hearing the possibility of making RT 34 wider, may I offer a couple of other considerations. Having walked the greenway many times, I have noticed that the foundations in the area of the former Main Street buildings might make a good location to shift RT 34 to with connections being made to Minerva and Elizabeth Streets. I would also think the shift could continue on the west side of Bridge Street for bit making that section of RT 34 a more scenic route being closer to the river. The shift could then make for additional parking in the areas in front of city hall and the senior center area by turning parallel parking into angle parking otherwise known as slotted parking. Those areas would be more motorist and pedestrian friendly for not having to fear speeding traffic and if you ever crossed the street there, you know what I am talking about and as I already said, especially after 10pm when the traffic lights are in flashing mode. With that shift, I would also suggest a pedestrian tunnel to be put in place on both sides to make that new intersection easier to cross at Main, Olivia and Bridge Streets. It is done in other cities so why not here.

When the State redesigned the intersection of Main and Olivia Streets, the area where the first River Restaurant and Kornbluts was, was supposed to be made into a park. Maybe the area that would be freed up on the other side could then be that park. Those areas could also be used for festivals and ceremonies and fireworks viewing and maybe even have a "gateway" symbol placed there, thereby hopefully attracting motorists and more residents to our downtown. Even consider having benches and tables and even a free WiFi bubble to attract people to the downtown area. For an example of what can be done to a major route I encourage you all to go to Times Square in NYC (at 42 Street) and see how they turned one of the "busiest" streets in probably the world, into a pedestrian friendly plaza and extended it down to 32nd Street. I only say this because of some who may say my idea is crazy because RT 34 is so busy and it can't be done; I would say that's why we need to redesign it to benefit Derby and its residents and that there is an example of it already done. With that shift, I would also like to see an extension over the top of the new route thereby increasing the amount of pedestrian friendly space above. Obviously the height of the maximum vehicle we would want to

pass through that area would have to be taken into consideration and maybe it is a way of getting some of those vehicles that should be taking RT 8 to 84 to finally do so anyway. I also believe that the new underpass would be safer for motorists in the winter time as well.

The other consideration would be to have RT 34 go underground at Minerva Street and coming out at Elizabeth Street. Again it would increase the pedestrian friendly and parking spaces in the city hall area above. Access to that area could be from the current city hall lot and it would make RT 34 much safer to cross at that point. Something else to consider with both these scenarios is that we have the perfect detour routes available during construction through the empty south main street area or thru Shelton via RT 8. This second scenario would be our "little dig" referring to the "big dig" in Boston. In my opinion I believe both can be done but I would prefer scenario number one and it possibly could be done with less of a detour since it would be adjacent to the current road, build the new road, and then make the connections.

As for another opinion on downtown, we are told not to judge a book by its cover but it is still done anyway. I say this because our downtown is our cover that can be seen coming in from Shelton or from its Riverwalk area as well as the thousands of motorists crossing the Commodore Hull Bridge daily. I brought this up during the previous administration and once again for the record, when drawing up conceptual plans I hope those views are also taken into consideration because I believe we would want that "look" or our "cover" to attract people to come visit, live, work and play here. It should be pleasing to the eye making the viewer to want to come and take a closer look and stay awhile. Even the "night view" should be taken into consideration with attractive lighting and since that section of the city has a "southern view" maybe the use of solar technology could be taken advantage of for the lighting there and maybe the design could be part of the structure(s) so it is not only functional but attractive as well. Now, since we were and may once again be a "port city" maybe even have some type of "fountain or water feature" that can be lit up at night and seen from the highway to attract people here. But having said all that, be careful of high rises and placement of structures. Especially if we don't have the fire or emergency apparatus to battle any extreme high rise emergencies. Along with my suggested redesign(s) of RT 34, I would also suggest very attractive and easy to follow signage to maybe entice some of those who normally wouldn't stop here anyway to possibly "stay awhile". As I always say, these may not be the best or only ideas out there but I hope they help with the discussion. I thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted by,

Markanthony Izzo February 08, 2010

To: City of Derby
Redevelopment Agency
1 Elizabeth Street
Derby CT

From: Albert J. Misiewicz, Jr.
171 Derby Avenue
Derby, CT 06418

Re: Tuesday, February 9, 2010 Agenda Item 8
Update on Downtown Redevelopment

The City of Derby will be embarking upon the next phase in the redevelopment of the South Side of Main Street. It has been stated by some city officials that we (the City of Derby) already have a mandate for what the City and its citizens desire within the area and that further public discussion would be counter productive and a waste of time. I would like to point out that a comprehensive discussion was undertaken sixteen (16) years ago. Unfortunately, the landscape and situation has changed since then. Current economic conditions are favorable to investing the time required to reassess what is obtainable for the area and more importantly, to examine our past efforts, learn from our mistakes, and then devise a plan of action to achieve our goals.

It is up to us to determine if we will continue to blindly stumble forward or if we will take the time and effort to comprehend the scope of this complex project and properly prepare ourselves as an informed and intelligent partner in its undertaking.

Thank you for your consideration.

Good evening,

Beth Colette, 157 Minerva Street

President, Olde Birmingham Business Association

The Olde Birmingham Business Association envisions Derby as a cultural destination by bringing back the South Side of Main Street. Give people a reason to stop, and they will, just based on the spectacular location of our city. We envision travelers stopping in Derby because they can see from Route 8 a vibrant, intriguing city with interesting buildings, shops, restaurants, attractions and opportunities for walking to provide a break before they move on.

In order to accomplish this we support the City of Derby's endeavors to redevelop the South Side of Main Street, as outlined in the City of Derby's Office of Community & Economic Development's 1998 Mission Statement, to:

- Implement a plan that leads to the revitalization of our downtown district.
- Create a city center that reflects and builds upon its history.
- Accommodate new plans that promote Downtown Derby's long-term economic viability

What better way to accomplish these goals than to bring people onto the very popular Riverwalk. This area needs to be developed as **Mixed use** – a development that combines two or more of the types of development: residential, commercial, office, industrial or institutional, which leads to

Mixed use communities - communities with a combination of housing, employment, shopping and recreation. Mixed use is not a development project that sections off residential and business into areas. The current plan of putting private homes on the riverbank would block off access to walking that section of the river. Having homes right there would not only make the homeowners and walkers uncomfortable, but if condos as tall as the current plans suggest they would make Derby look like a fortress city and promote elitism in this cloistered condo area. A prime example of Mixed use development is the Haven's Ninth Square redevelopment project, where the 16 buildings affected in that scope were required to adhere to the mixed use concept. We should learn from other cities. And th market currently in the shape that it is, new condos are not a good idea. The prime land on the water should be where restaurants are built, to make this asset available to the greatest number of people, both visitors and the people of Derby. Having a patio open right onto the Riverwalk would make this an inviting area and allow visitors to enjoy the beauty of the confluence of the Housatonic and Naugatuck Rivers. Residential units could be built above the restaurants.

To make Derby a place to make people want to stop I would like ask a few questions and offer some suggestions. If there are three developers

I would again like to point out that thousand of cars a day drive through Derby. If I leave you with no other images it is to envision Derby as a destination where travelers and citizens alike enjoy a vibrant city by the river with a sense of the its glorious past, an intriguing present and a bright future

Thank you for your time,

Beth Colette

Anita Dugatto - Ms. Dugatto stated the DOT is asking for public input, the design has not been done at all for Rte 34, they want to Derby residents what they would like to see, money is in place and designing is the next step. They are looking for specifics as to how wide the sidewalk

is, and a lot of residents do not want Rte 34 to go faster, we want it smoother and development should wait until Rte 34 is done. She can't say that more clearly.

Mayor Staffieri said next Wednesday there should be a date for the public to come to an informational session of the design and widening of Rte 34. The date and time will be posted.

Ms. O'Malley stated this is by federal and state guidelines and it has to have a public hearing.

Dan Waleski - 21 Elm Street. At the last meeting Anita and himself requested a community relations meeting to get the public's input into this redevelopment project and he thinks the presentations today justify and validate the fact that we have to have more of this sort of thing. Also he would like to suggest having a public speaker come in and discuss the marketing aspects. It behooves the agency to bring in some experts.

John Izzo - Weichert Realtor and listing agent for Life Touch. He would like to know if the City is currently negotiating with property owners. Will the City be making an offer for the Life Touch site and when and how will it be paid for?

Dan Waleski - Can the agency clarify what DeCarlo and Doll's involvement will be?

John Izzo - Life Touch is considering a tear down dependent on an offer from the City.

Motion to close public portion by Mr. Stevens, second by Mr. Hughes, all in favor, motion passes. Public Portion closed at 6:54 p.m.

Elect Chairman

Motion to nominate Joe Bomba as Chair by Mr. Stevens, second by Mr. Hughes.

Motion to close the nominations by Mr. Hughes, second by Mr. Stevens, all in favor, motion passes. Mr. Bomba is the chairman.

Update on Downtown Redevelopment

Ms. O'Malley addressed the issues from the public portion.

Best Practices - Ms. O'Malley chairs a comprehensive economic development strategy committee – an 18 city and town region. It was established to secure federal funding for economic development projects. She talks with colleagues across the state on a regular basis and how they met those challenges and what they are doing with their downtown. It is an effective means for funding but also a best practice for our Rte 8 corridor. She makes several trips to the Economic Development Administration in Philadelphia to talk about Derby and its citizens. The State and Federal officials are also best practices. There was a meeting with the CT Development Authority, CT Dept of Community Economic and Community Development, DOT, State Traffic Commission to make them aware of our mixed use development, and for advice and funding. Best practices are being looked at.

Plans vs. Conceptual Plans - Derby doesn't have plans, we have conceptual plans. There is an approved Redevelopment zone with a mixed use approval. Condos on the river is at this board's discretion and is dictated by developers to a certain degree. Development is dictated by what is viable in this market. The economy dictates what can and cannot go in the downtown area. This area of land is a beautiful gem and will get developed. Ms. O'Malley has had several unsolicited developers and solicited developers contact her with serious interest.

Rte 34 - The Mayor and City officials met today with DeCarlo and Doll - the engineer firm working on the Rte 34 design. Rte 34 will enhance the redevelopment area. DOT doesn't determine the footprint of Rte 34, Derby does and DOT approve or disapprove it. DeCarlo and Doll will be invited to the next redevelopment meeting which will include property acquisition.

Update on DOT parcel

Ms. O'Malley met with the DECD and the engineers to discuss the timing of the road construction. The road project should be out to bid by the end of the month. Hopefully construction will begin in the spring. Ms. O'Malley has a lot of interest in that parcel of land.

Mr. Bomba opened up a public portion to discuss downtown redevelopment.

Ms. Dugatto asked if there is a preliminary plan of Rte 34. Ms. O'Malley stated the surveying has been done. Comments from the public hearing will be presented to DOT.

Mr. Waleski feels there should be a written outline of step by step procedures. The City should pick and choose very carefully what businesses we want.

Executive Session - Discuss Negotiations for a Proposal from a Developer with the City of Derby

Motion by Mr. Stevens to enter into Executive Session at 7:20 p.m. to discuss a proposal by a developer to the City subject to adjournment and invite the Mayor, Corporation Counsel, Ms. O'Malley, second by Mr. Hughes, all in favor, motion passes.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Denise Cesaroni
Recording Secretary*

*****These minutes are subject to approval at the next Redevelopment Agency meeting.